

**STATEMENT FOR THE RECORD  
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INDIAN AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
FOR THE  
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS  
UNITED STATES SENATE  
ON  
GANGS IN INDIAN COUNTRY**

**July 30, 2009**

Chairman Dorgan, Vice-Chairman Barrasso, and Members of the Committee, I am pleased to provide this statement for the record on behalf of the Department of the Interior (Department) regarding youth gangs in Indian country.

Law enforcement and judicial jurisdiction over criminal activity related to gang activity in Indian Country usually overlap with other jurisdictions. For example, numerous tribal jurisdictions border towns and cities that in many cases are home to significant Indian populations.

The 2007 National Youth Gang Survey, sponsored by the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice, reported that there are about 27,000 youth gangs and about 788,000 identified gang members in America. The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is currently conducting a study specifically focused on Indian country that will provide more detailed information. However, it is evident that Indian country communities face many of the same challenges that other rural and urban communities face, and require the same suite of law enforcement and community services in order to successfully counter the threats posed by increasing gang activity. Law enforcement, the courts, social and education services are critical to working with families and parents to provide resources to address problems associated with gang activity.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) believes there is a direct influence between local drug distribution activity in Indian country and traffic involving larger drug distribution cartels. These cartels play an ancillary- and sometimes direct- role in the gang activity in Indian country.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), working with our federal, tribal and state/local partners, is developing an intelligence program to improve our ability to address and eliminate gangs and drug cartels in Indian country. The Department proposed in the FY 2010 budget to add six additional intelligence analysts to improve information gathering and the ability to process data to determine proactive measures. The proposed analyst positions may be placed at critical locations to work in conjunction with other intelligence agencies. The two analyst positions

currently are located at El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) in Texas. The two analyst positions at EPIC work in conjunction with all of the various federal intelligence agencies to track gang and drug activity in the southwest as well as other locations where there is known drug cartel activity.

An effective strategy for dealing with gangs that promote illegal activities must be holistic. This means the strategy must encompass community involvement through joint efforts by the police, courts, schools, and social services. Most importantly, this means developing programs that work with the families of youth to afford them more constructive activities and alternatives to gangs.

We must be more aggressive in policing to effectively enforce laws that prohibit crime. At the same time, police should be working with educators, community service providers and community leaders to address the issues that cause increased gang activity and related public safety concerns. There is a wealth of information, activities and programs that foster this end. The BIA recently advertised and hired a number of school resource officers that are or will be specially trained to teach and work in schools. We have also placed officers at strategic locations throughout the United States to work with other law enforcement agencies to combat and interdict criminal drug trafficking. We have engaged community policing resources to work with the communities to prevent and combat crime.

Cooperative policing by the various jurisdictions is essential in dealing with gangs because gang members seek to exploit perceived gaps in law enforcement capacity across jurisdictions. For example, communication, coordination and collaboration is vital with other jurisdictions that have gang units to share intelligence, develop strategies, and work cooperatively to enforce laws. The FBI safe trails task forces, the Drug Enforcement Administration, and the U.S. Marshals Service Investigative Operations task forces are prime examples of effective inter-jurisdictional policing. Police working with Boys and Girls Clubs, schools, child welfare and probation services are other mechanisms of a total community holistic approach.

Gang violence and influence as a conduit to other criminal activity is a problem. Better policing requires focused attention on all aspects of the community. The ability to respond to all types of calls for help in the community is critical. Gang activity thrives in situations where resources are limited and community support is lacking. A successful effort to thwart gang activity will require determined action by everyone involved, including law enforcement, parents of youth, communities, schools, courts, and federal, tribal, and state/local officials.